

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Public School Choice

Adopted April 6, 2005

The Connecticut State Board of Education is committed to ensuring the highest possible achievement level for every Connecticut student. This commitment is realized in schools that offer a creative and flexible environment that values each student's unique abilities, talents, interests, learning styles and backgrounds. By offering parents and students choices among a range of high quality educational programs and settings, we believe our educational system will maximize the opportunity for each student to achieve his/her highest potential. No one single curriculum, educational model or pedagogy is best for all students; rather, each district must consider a combination of these which is tailored to meet each student's individual strengths and needs.

Choice programs have been found to directly and positively influence the level of both parental involvement and student motivation. The Board supports efforts to offer the following options at ALL levels: school readiness programs, magnet SCHOOLS, public charter SCHOOLS, Open Choice, interdistrict cooperative grant programs, technical high schools, and vocational agricultural centers.

The State Board of Education encourages each local and regional school board to utilize existing statutory authority to increase school and program opportunities by providing a wider selection of rigorous educational experiences within and across school districts. The Board is committed to offering a range of educational options to parents and students and will continue its efforts to expand and enhance these programs.

Below are descriptions of some of the major public school choice programs currently in operation:

- **School Readiness Programs** offer parents of preschool children options among public school and community-based early education programs that meet high standards established by the state. School readiness GRANT programs range from 2.5 hours per day up to 10 hours per day.
- **Interdistrict Magnet Schools** are designed to voluntarily reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation. They seek to attract students from school districts by offering a special, high-quality curriculum. These exciting and innovative schools provide educational opportunities for students who benefit from a range of themes or teaching philosophies that include performing arts, mathematics, science and technology, international studies, early childhood and multicultural education. Students are admitted by lottery.
- **Public Charter Schools** are authorized by the State Board of Education. Local charter schools are funded by local or regional boards of education. State charter schools are funded by the state. They provide small-scale educational programs managed by a governing board comprised of teachers and parents or guardians of the students enrolled in the school, and may include community members. Charter schools offer a range of educational programs and enhanced teacher-parent communication.

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- **The Open Choice program** provides interdistrict enrollment options for parents and students from large urban school systems and surrounding suburban districts on a space-available basis. The purpose of the program is to improve academic achievement; reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation or preserve racial and ethnic balance; and provide a choice of educational programs for students enrolled in the public schools.
- **Interdistrict Cooperative Grant Programs** focus on the academic improvement of students in diverse educational settings and promote an understanding of diversity among the program participants. The programs include a host of educational fields, including themes such as mathematics, science, environmental studies, visual and performing arts, future teachers, world languages, writing, international studies, and marine science. This grant program also supports summer residential programs at universities and colleges that provide academically challenging courses for students from different backgrounds and communities.
- **Connecticut Technical High Schools** allow students in grades 9-12 to learn a trade technology while earning a high school diploma. Students select an area of specialization after participating in a ninth-grade exploratory program. Students attending technical high schools are prepared to attend two- and four -year colleges and for immediate productive employment. They can also earn college credit during their high school years through articulation programs with community colleges. These schools offer full-time, part-time and evening programs and serve high school students and adults.
- **Regional Vocational Agricultural Centers** serve secondary students in regional centers located in comprehensive high schools around the state. Each center includes instruction in agricultural science and technology education, prepares students for entry-level employment or higher education, and develops leadership and employability skills. Programs may include instruction in plant and animal science, agricultural mechanics, aquaculture, agribusiness, food science, natural resources and the environment. Acceptance into the program is based on students' career interests.